

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

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CONYERS INTRODUCES “THE FAIRNESS IN ANTITRUST IN NATIONAL SPORTS (FANS) ACT”

Today Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee joined members of the House and Senate in introducing the “Fairness in Antitrust in National Sports Act” – better known as the “FANS Act”.

Congressman Conyers issued the following statement regarding this new legislation:

“After one of the greatest World Series of all time that gave a much needed boost to the entire Country, I was shocked by Major League Baseball’s decision just two days later to eliminate two teams as early as December 15th of this year.

This is why it is imperative that Congress move quickly on the FANS Act to insure that anti-competitive decisions by Major League Baseball are subject to the antitrust laws like all other professional sports and businesses.

Any time 30 of the wealthiest and most influential individuals get together behind closed doors and agree to reduce output, that cannot be a good thing for anyone but the monopolists. If GM and Ford got together and jointly agreed to cut production, people would be outraged. That is exactly what baseball has done.

In 1922, the Supreme Court erroneously held that baseball was a “game” that did not involve “interstate commerce” and was therefore beyond the reach of the antitrust laws. The Supreme Court upheld the exemption in a case brought in 1972 by Curt Flood, one of the greatest players of his time. But now that professional baseball is a \$3 billion annual business and the time has long since passed when it can be contended that baseball does not constitute “interstate commerce.” This is why in 1998, I led the way in repealing the exemption as it applies to labor disputes, in the well named “Curt Flood Act” – now it is time to finish the job.

The elimination of baseball teams from a particular city, be it Minnesota, Montreal or Florida, will result in the loss of millions of dollar in revenue to the local economy and the loss of thousands of jobs. Not just the jobs of baseball players, but the jobs of ticket takers, food vendors, security personnel, and numerous others.

A little competition is good for everyone. If the antitrust laws can apply to major league football, basketball, and hockey, there is not a reason in the world they cannot apply to major league baseball. Let’s level the playing field once and for all.

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